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UNCLAS JAKARTA 001262

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, DRL, DRL/AWH, DRL/IRF
PLEASE PASS TO SPECIAL REP FARAH PANDITH
NSC FOR J.BADER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MOVING TOWARD A U.S.-INDONESIA INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

¶1. (U) Please see Action Request in para 7; this message is Sensitive but Unclassified.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Indonesian officials are eager to develop a bilateral interfaith dialogue with the U.S. as part of our emerging Comprehensive Partnership. Mission is discussing the idea with GOI officials and civil society. Indonesians have identified two potential themes for such a dialogue: combating negative stereotypes of Islam and empowering moderate Muslim voices. Mission believes that the Department's Office of the Special Representative to Muslim Communities can play a key role in moving this process forward. Action Request is contained in Para 7. END SUMMARY.

PROPOSING A BILATERAL INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

¶3. (SBU) Indonesia--the world's largest Muslim nation by population--wants to be a bridge between the Muslim world and the West. Highly receptive to President Obama's Cairo speech, the GOI wants to engage the U.S. in this area. During FM Wirajuda's meeting with the Secretary in June, he called for the inclusion of such a bilateral dialogue in our Comprehensive Partnership. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DEPLU) officials have told us that the GOI is willing to host the first bilateral U.S.-Indonesia interfaith dialogue if we agree to the proposal. (Note: Indonesia already engages in bilateral interfaith dialogues with the United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden, and Russia.)

¶4. (SBU) Indonesian officials have identified two central themes for such a dialogue: combating negative stereotypes of Islam and empowering moderate voices. They noted to us that any dialogue must not mirror the activities of USG religious tolerance commissions, which rate religious freedom internationally. Our contacts stressed that they want a dialogue as a way to bring the American and Indonesian people closer by allowing the two sides to discuss faith and its role in society. GOI officials told us that discussion of ways to counter extremism would be a key part of any such dialogue.

CIVIL SOCIETY INVOLVEMENT CRITICAL

¶5. (SBU) We have emphasized to the GOI that engaging civil society, especially religious leaders, academics and journalists, is key to the success of any dialogue. Indonesian officials agree that coordinating with Indonesia's two largest mass Muslim organizations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama (NU)--with over 80 million combined members--is key, both in terms of programming and logistical support. Both organizations are highly involved in engaging in interfaith dialogues around the world. In addition, there are many other Indonesian civil society organizations that have experience in this area that could be engaged in this

effort.

NEXT STEPS

¶6. (SBU) Mission believes that Special Representative to Muslim Communities Farah Pandith can play a critical role in an interfaith dialogue with Indonesia. The Ambassador has invited Special Representative Pandith to visit Indonesia in order to see firsthand how pluralism and tolerance co-exist in Indonesia. Bilateral interfaith dialogue with Indonesia would also be an excellent avenue for the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships to identify potential people-to-people projects between the two countries.

ACTION REQUEST

¶7. (SBU) We request that Department carefully review the interfaith dialogue idea and consider ideas for moving the process forward, including during VIP visits. Mission also suggests that Washington reach out to non-profit interfaith groups and experts, such as the New York-based Appeal for Conscience or Cardinal Theodore McCarrick (Emeritus) from the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., as possible U.S.-based partners in a dialogue. END ACTION REQUEST.
HUME